*BX
7260
B7A5

Thomas Bridge--First minister of the Church in Fairfield.

by

Frank De Wette Andrews.

AA 001 345 863 3
UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY

THE LIBRARY
OF
THE UNIVERSITY
OF CALIFORNIA
LOS ANGELES

THOMAS BRIDGE

FIRST MINISTER

OF

THE CHURCH IN FAIRFIELD

By

Frank D. Andrews

Secretary Vineland Historical and Antiquarian Society

PRIVATELY PRINTED

VINELAND NEW JERSEY

1914

THOMAS BRIDGE

FIRST MINISTER

OF

THE CHURCH IN FAIRFIELD

By

Frank D. Andrews

Secretary Vineland Historical and Antiquarian Society

PRIVATELY PRINTED

VINELAND NEW JERSEY

1914

PREFACE.

At some distance from the main road, west from the village of Fairton, Fairfield township, is a grove of stately trees among the fertile fields, making, with glimpses of the river, a beautiful picture of living green in a charming landscape.

The approach to the grove is through a modern cemetery. Before entering, we pause to read the inscription on a handsome granite monument erected to commemorate the early settlers, who, in the seventeenth century founded here the Church of Christ. The monument bears the name of their minister, Rev. Thomas Bridge.

On entering the grove there can be seen through the subdued light filtering through the leaves, the grave stones of some of the early inhabitants of this region, men and women, who long ago, lived, moved, and acted their part in life's little drama near this secluded retreat. Here by the Cohansey and in this neighborhood, Rev. Thomas Bridge spent several years of his eventful life; "a most improving school of patience to him," it proved, to quote a learned divine who became his friend in the larger field to which he removed.

The religious character of the Connecticut settlers of Fairfield was one of the important factors leading to the settlement of Mr. Bridge among them. Without that essential element of godliness and piety, it is doubtful if Cumberland County would have the honor of claiming him as one of its distinguished early residents.

From the site of the old church on the Cohansey to Boston, two hundred years ago, was a journey of a week or more, now it is possible to cover the distance during daylight.

In Boston we enter the old burying ground adjoining King's Chapel, and wander awhile among the graves reading the quaint inscriptions on the old stones. Presently we come upon the Cotton tomb wherein lie the remains of four of the early divines connected with the First Church. The last of the "Reverend and learned pastors," whose name is inscribed upon the tomb is that of "Mr THOMAS BRIDGE Aged 58 years Dec d September the 26 1715" Here at last, his wanderings over, he was laid at rest with the illustrious dead.

In order that Fairfield and Cumberland County may share with Boston the honor of having this eminent divine among its early ministers, this sketch, necessarily brief and imperfect regarding Mr. Bridge's life in West Jersey, has been written; such as it is, however, it will throws some light upon his residence and first pastorate in the Colonies.

The writer acknowledges his indebtedness to the "Archives of the State of New Jersey," First Series, volumes: II, XXI, XXIII; "History of Cumberland County," by Charles E. Sheppard; and the "History of the First Church in Boston."

FRANK D. ANDREWS.

VINELAND, N. J.

1914.

THOMAS BRIDGE,

First Minister
of
Fairfield, New Jersey

When the advantages of the climate, soil and location of the region along the Cohansey River in West New Jersey became known, a number of families from Connecticut Colony made their way thither, locating on the rich fertile land along and near the river and streams.

Before the close of the seventeenth century the settlers on the south and east side of the Cohansey, applied to the Provisional Legislature for incorporation, and in May 1697, it was enacted that:

"the Tract of Land in Cohansey, purchased by several people lately inhabitants of Fairfield in New England, be from and after the date hereof, enacted into a township, and be called Fairfield, which is hereby empowered to the same privileges as any other Township in this Province are or have been, that are not Towns incorporate."

While the township was called Fairfield, from Fairfield in Connecticut, the settlement was known as New England Town, from the character of the settlers.

The first settlers, those who came from Fairfield in Connecticut, were mostly descendants of the Puritans who had settled New England; an intelligent, enterprising and hardy people, a religious people, accustomed to attend public worship and with due reverence for their spiritual teacher and guide.

In their new home by the Cohansey they could not long remain without a minister, clergymen however, were not readily secured by every small community desiring one. Happily the New England people were to have a pastor of unusual attainments and ability.

The West New Jersey Society, an organization of London merchants, purchased, March 4, 1692, of Dr. Daniel Coxe, the right to the government and soil of a large tract of land in the southern part of West Jersey, which they were desirous of selling off to settlers.

Dr. Coxe was a man of extensive acquaintance and numbered among his friends the Rev. Thomas Bridge, at that time residing in Bermuda, with whom he maintained a correspondence. In one of his letters he expressed an inclination to remove to West Jersey and the possibility of others accompanying him. Although Dr. Coxe had disposed of a large part of his land to the West New Jersey Society, he still had an interest in that portion of the country and would gladly see it settled by religious people.

He communicated with the members of the Society who addressed Mr. Bridge as follows:

London ye 29th July 1692

Sr Wee are informed by Dr Coxe that yo u declare yo r self inclyned togeather with divers other Inhabitants of the Bermudas to remove unto & reside in West Jersey Wee are very glad a Person of yo r Principles & pfession should entertaine such thoughts ffor having received an Hono ble Character of you from diverse wee expect not onely benefitt should accrue unto the Inhabitants by yo r Pious Instructions accompanied with an Exemplary life But also by yo r Prudentiall Council in reference to Civill & Secular affairs wherein yo u have

been Providentially necesitated to Exercise yo r self And as wee have been assured very successfully: Sr if you are confirmed in yo r resolution wee shall give you all ye Encouragem t Countenance & Authority wee are Capable of. Many Persons in diverse Parts of ye Country have frequently exprest their desires of a Minister & assure us they will Contribute toward his Comfortable subsistence & pay him all that duty respect & deference his worke deserves And for that Dr. Coxe hath conveyed unto us ye Government of the Country with great part of his Lands ffor your Encouragm t npon your Arrival wee will give order that you may in what Scituation you please take up Two Thousand Acres one Thousand to be yo r owne in ffee forever The other to be annexed unto ye office & descend unto him who shall Succeed you When ever it shall please God by your death or otherwise to cause a vacancy. Wee are besides contriveing some other Methods whereby to render your station more comfortable Honorable & profittable and doubt not but wee shall Conclude to your full satisfaction and all those who accompany you shall find fair dealing Encouragem t Protection and assistance from

Sr Your affectionate ffriends and Servants

Tho: Lane:	Edm: Harrrson
E. Richier:	Wm Wighman
James Boddington:	Rob: Michell
John Jurin:	James St John.

As an additional inducement toward his friend's removal, Dr. Coxe, in a letter dated August 5, 1692, personally offered an annual allowance in money during his lifetime, should Mr. Bridge remain that long in the Province.

Dr. Coxe's letter, and that of the West Jersey Society are to be found among the West Jersey Records in the Secretary of State's office, Trenton, N. J.

The letter to Mr. Bridge at Bermuda is as follows:

Sr

I received yor s & returned an answer ye last Moneth but fearing that should not come seasonably to yo r hands & haveing I hope a safe Conveyance I determined to neglect noe opportunity whereby I might manifest ye friendship I cherish for you & confirme you in ye designe of favouring a countrey wherein I am deeply concerned & whose welfare I would pmote for ye sake of ye Inhabitants abstracted from my owne Interest which will I am very Confident be much advanced by yo r presence sound Doctrine & Exemplary life And I hope you will thereby reap not only ye satisfaction of haveing faithfully served our great Master in ye great work of Converting & Confirming precious Immortall Souls: But I verily beleeve you will be rewarded wth ye blessings of a quiet pleasant heathfull residence: And in ye Love & Esteeme of those who shall voluntarily come under yo r Pastorall care with due m tintenance: Togeather with Civill & Christian Respects from others of different perswations. Besides which you will have ye Authority Encouragem t & assistance of those unto whom I have delegated ye Governm t of West Jersey unto whom I have given a Character of yo r Person an Account of yo r behavio r in diverse parts whither you have beene providentially called they have signified their satisfaction in a Letter which yo u will receive I suppose by ye same Conveyance which brings this; Besides what they have proposed I do hereby faithfully assure yo u I will make yo u a Considerable annual allowance to be paid you in money dureing my life if you soe long Continue your residence in our Province. That ye onely wise God would Councell you in ye disposall of yourself prosper & succeed all your Generous Pious designes & under-

takeing is & shall be the Constant fervent prayer of him who is

Dear Sr

You r most affectionate friend & faithful servant

Dan: Coxe.

August 5th 1692

Mr. Bridge was undoubtedly flattered by the high regard of his friend, and pleased with the very liberal offer of the Society should he settle in West Jersey.

He could not, however, immediately sever his connection with the people of Bermuda, many of his flock having become greatly attatched to him, and hoped to prevail upon him to settle, then, a plague had recently swept the Islands and they still needed him; consequently, although accepting the offers, he did not come to America until two years or more, the exact date of his arrival in West Jersey being unknown. The probabilty is that he was there in the spring of 1695, for he must have been on the ground to have selected a tract of land on the south side of the Cohansey, containing nine hundred and twelve acres, of which he took six hundred and eight, and John Green, a Cohansey blacksmith, three hundred and four, from George Hutchinson, of Burlington, by deed, dated the 24th of June 1695.

It was not, however, until nearly two years later, Mr. Bridge obtained a deed to the land promised by the West Jersey Society. Thomas Revell, acting as their trustee, made a deed to Thomas Bridge, Gentleman, May 17, 1697, for one thousand acres in fee, reciting that it was done in pursuance of the Society's letter to him.

This tract was located on the east side of the Cohansey River, partly in and extending to the su-

burbs of what is now the city of Bridgeton, and has since been known as the Indian Fields tract, the Indians having cleared a portion on which they had a settlement. He also secured an additional tract of two hundred and twenty acres for which he later took a deed.

Mr. Bridge divided his land into lots of twenty-five acres, which, it is said, he soon sold to the incoming settlers; the incorporation of the township of Fairfield, the establishment of a religious society and settlement of an accomplished and talented minister, proving a great inducement to locate where these advantages were to be found.

Rev. Thomas Bridge, who thus became an extensive land owner in Cohansey Precinct, and the first minister of the Church at Fairfield, was born at Hackney, a suburb of London, England, in 1657.

His parents were persons of wealth and position, and he enjoyed the advantages of his station. In 1666 the family mansion with its contents were destroyed in the great fire of London, only a hamper of silver plate is reported to have been saved, the family records were also burned. Thomas Bridge was educated at Oxford, and after graduation spent some time in travel, visiting the continent and the East.

Being of a serious religious nature he studied for the ministry and took orders.

He married Miss Elizabeth Turner, the only child of a widow, who, by a second marriage, became the wife of William Patterson, founder of the Bank of England.

Before going to the West Indies and the Sommers' Isles, he visited the Mediterranean and traveled elsewhere. Crossing the Atlantic he stopped at Jamaica where he preached the gospel, at New Providence, he was considered one of the chief men, and owing

to his qualifications was frequently called upon to serve in civil matters as well as in clerical affairs.

In the West Indies, at Barbadoes, New Providence and Bermuda his labors were highly appreciated and the people endeavored to induce him to remain; he chose, however, to accept the offer of the West Jersey Society and settle in America.

Just when the church at Fairfield was organized cannot be definitely stated, the early records having been lost or destroyed. The first church like the homes of the settlers was of logs; rough, unfinished in appearance, but the very centre of religious interest to the little band of worshipers.

These pioneer settlers entered into an agreement, June 10, 1697, to divide certain land among themselves, reserving plots for the minister and parsonage, and bound themselves to "obtain and mainetaine a Sound & Orthodox Ministr of the Gospell to preach the Gospell amongst uss," and they still further agreed, "That a School for the teaching of Children to read & write English shall be mainetained from time to time."

These men, and with them the families of those who were married, largely composed the congregation of whom Mr. Bridge was pastor. They heard from his lips the words of the gospel, of God's love and tenderness for the righteous, and punishment to sinners. Faithfully they attended divine services, as was their custom in their former home. They obligated themselves to support the minister, and maintain a school for their children.

Are not these men and women worthy of our highest regard and esteem? Should not their descendants feel grateful that their ancestors were persons of character, from whom it is an honor to trace their

lineage? How great an influence Mr. Bridge had in shaping the lives of his parishioners can only be estimated; we can readily believe, qualified as he was in civil and religious affairs, he was looked upon with admiration and reverence, and soon won the confidence and love of his people. Evidently he had gained the appreciation of David Shepherd, who, mindful of the change that comes to all men, made his will November 20, 1695, leaving Mr. Bridge a legacy. Possibly he conducted the last rites over his remains a few days later as Mr. Shepherd had put off signing that document until shortly before his death. Mr. Bridge was one of the three witnesses of the will of John Green, the Cohansey blacksmith, with whom he was associated in his first purchase of land a year and a half before. He may have advised the widow, and son David, of their duty in the settlement of the estate. From the old records we learn he was called upon to serve his townsmen when the last legal document was signed, drawing the will, perhaps signing as witness, comforting the dying, and consoling the bereaved.

His name appears with others as witness of the will of John Miller, a wealthy farmer, August 23, 1699. When James Breading, was about to die, he made a nuncupative will in the presence of his landlady and neighbors, a statement to that effect was signed before Mr. Bridge and others, November 17, 1701. Mr Breading was a merchant from Boston, with a stock of dry goods, rum, and some books to supply the wants of the inhabitants.

The court granted administration to his brother, Nathaniel Breading, merchant, of Boston.

It is to be regretted the papers relating to the early church at Fairfield are lost and so little is

known regarding Rev. Mr. Bridge's pastorate.

We have found that he obtained a deed for land in the vicinity of the settlement in which he was to reside, June 24, 1695, and assumed he was in West Jersey some time previous to that date. When he left Bermuda, and whether he visited England during the interval between his acceptance of the Society's offer and coming to America does not appear.

Taking the spring of 1695, then, as that of his first appearance in West Jersey, we have before us a man not yet forty, in the very prime of life, well educated, talented, travelled—an inhabitant for a portion of his life at least, of the metropolis of London—and the seat of learning at Oxford, one accustomed to the habits of good society; the refinement and culture of that period.

The change, even from the Bermuda's, must have been marked. West Jersey, south and east of the Cohansey River, had but recently been opened for settlement. Familiar as we are with the locality at the present day, it is difficult to picture it as it was at the close of the seventeenth century. The river, and Delaware Bay into which it emptied were much the same as now; long stretches of marsh bordered the bay; the land was in places heavily wooded, with here and there a clearing around the log cabin of a settler. In a favored locality, near the south bank of the river was the church, built from the trees of the forest about it. The men and women to whom Mr. Bridge was minister and religious leader, were not unlike many another company who had left their New England homes hoping to better their condition; active, energetic, enterprising and intelligent.

They felled the trees, built their homes, tilled the soil and in due season reaped the harvest. Game

was abundant in the woods, fish, oysters and clams were plentiful in the bay, and no one need hunger who would work, and yet they could not wholly escaped the suffering and privations, sickness and death common to the lot of all pioneers.

Such was the place and such were the conditions as the seventeenth century neared its close.

We have every reason to believe Mr. Bridge and his family were warmly welcomed and every attention shown them compatible with the primitive surroundings.

The family consisted of his wife, Elizabeth, and four daughters. The first born, Elizabeth, was named after her mother; Ellen, born in New Providence, October 1st 1688; Lydia and Copia.

It has been said by one of his descendants that "Mr. Bridge educated his daughters as though they were sons and preparing for Oxford, they were mistresses of three languages, painted on canvas and glass, were highly accomplished needlewomen, and better educated generally than was common in Europe at that period." Doubtless their education, far in advance of young ladies of the time, the result of their parent's instruction, commenced while residing in Fairfield, qualified them for the larger field they later entered.

It is also related that Mr. Bridge would not allow them to gather flowers or walk in the garden on Sunday, keeping them behind closed shutters in the larger community to which they later removed, that there should be no inducement to take their attention from grave and more important things.

If he found it necessary to be thus strict with his daughters in Fairfield, he but followed the example and custom of the Puritans of New England.

One serious drawback to a person of Mr. Bridge's temperament, isolated as he was, would be the lack of clerical associates. Greenwich, a few miles distant, on the opposite side of the river, was settled by the Quakers of Fenwick's Colony, and, although men of other denominations were purchasing land, and moving in, it was not until later a Presbyterian Society was organized. The Baptists were early in the neighborhood and were under the leadership of Rev. Thomas Killingworth, of Salem, and Rev. Timothy Brooks, both men of some attainments, who, though of a different faith from Mr. Bridge were doubtless agreeable associates. Rev. Jedediah Andrews, a graduate of Harvard College in 1695, came to Philadelphia during the summer of 1698. Mr. Bridge and he could find common ground on which to base a friendship, being of a similar faith. Rev. Mr. Andrews became acquainted with the Fairfield people who turned to him to supply them with a minister after the removal of Mr. Bridge.

Mr. Andrews induced his college classmate Rev. Joseph Smith to take the place, saying "they were the best people of this neighbourhood," which may be considered a worthy testimonial to the Fairfield people. Among the residents of the township and vicinity a number could be named who in wealth and position were evidently able to meet Mr. Bridge in a social way.

Although Fairfield was somewhat isolated, being off the main lines of travel, yet by water communication was readily had with Salem, Philadelphia, and Burlington.

At the latter place then the seat of government, Mr. Bridge had a very good friend, Edward Hunloke, Deputy Governor under Governor Coxe, Col-

lector of the Port of Burlington, merchant, and a man of wealth, who at his death in the summer of 1702, left his friend Thomas Bridge a legacy.

During Mr. Bridge's residence in Fairfield, many changes had taken place; a number of the early settlers had passed away, among them: John Miller, William Clarke, John and Samuel Fithian, David Wescott, Jonathan Morehouse, Michael Hannah, Thomas Furbush, Philipp Vickary and others; men women and children taken from the church and community and laid in lonely graves about their homes.

Settlers from other sections of the country were coming in, a saw mill furnished lumber and better houses were being built, more land was cleared, a grist mill ground their grain, more crops were grown and the success of the settlement seemed assured.

It is evident, however, that Mr. Bridge accustomed to frequent changes, was not content to end his days in this locality. He doubtless prefered the social advantage of a larger place, especially for his growing family.

When it became known that he proposed to remove it must have brought sorrow if not despair to many of his congregation, the loss of their minister to whom they must have become greatly attatched during the years of service among them, and the difficulty of securing a man to fill his place was anything but encouraging for the church.

Mr. Bridge was endeared to them by many ties; he had baptized their children, united in marriage the young men and maidens, followed the aged to their last resting place, sympathized with the afflicted, and doubtless performed all the duties of the good pastor, surely they could not let him go.

Mr. Bridge, however, was not to be prevailed upon to remain; he was now approaching that age when his wanderings must cease and choose a permanent abiding place. He had disposed of the land he acquired by his removal to West Jersey, for which he had rendered an equivalent by ministering to the Church at Fairfield for several years past, now he must seek a new home in another and larger field.

What encouragement Mr. Bridge had that led him to choose Boston is uncertain, possibly he had relatives there, a clergyman of his name, Rev. Christopher Bridge, of King's Chapel, had been in office since 1699.

Let us, before Mr. Bridge leaves West Jersey, consider for a moment the character of the man, as given by one of his cotemporaries who knew him in Boston, the Rev. William Cooper, who writes of him "as a man of much piety, devotion, love, humility, meekness &c, and of great fidelity in the discharge of his office. His prayers were particularly impressive. Prayer was his gift and the bible his library." This speaks well of the man who had served the church at Fairfield.

In taking leave of the church he had established, the congregation he had served, and the friends he had made during his residence in West Jersey, Mr. Bridge must have experienced some regret on severing the ties that bound them.

At that time long journeys were made by water, whenever practical. We can imagine Mr. Bridge and family after a tender and sorrowful farewell, sailing down the crooked reaches of the Cohansey to the Delaware on their way to Salem, where a sloop could be had to convey them to their destination.

At Salem lived Captain Eliezer Dorbey, formerly of Boston, in New England, who made several trips yearly between these two ports. To go to Boston from Salem County passengers would naturally take this route unless they preferred to sail from Philadelphia.

We have assumed, with some reason, Mr. Bridge, traveled by water, and with his family and household goods, sailed with Captain Dorbey in his sloop from Salem, upward of nine years having passed since he first came to West Jersey.

Evidently nothing occurred to interfere with the travellers and they arrived safely in Boston, March 17, 1704.

A voyage at that period was not devoid of danger, England having declared war against the French in 1702, because of the claims of Louis XIV to the throne of Spain. A French Privateer lay off the coast ready to capture and plunder any vessel worth while. Captain Dorbey on his return trip from Boston July 25, was taken by the Privateer at Sandy Hook. After plundering his sloop of the greater part of the cargo, they gave him back his sloop and he continued his voyage, reaching Salem the 7th of August, thankful, no doubt, of his release.

When Mr. Bridge, his wife and four daughters, reached Boston, there was not a newspaper to announce their arrival, and it was not until a month later (April 11, 1704,) that "The Boston News-Letter," the first newspaper published in the Colonies made its appearance.

Settled in Boston, Mr. Bridge made the acquaintance of several of the leading citizens, some of whom on hearing him preach were impressed with his ability as a minister. The First Church endeav-

ored to secure his services and in response to their call received the following letter under date of March 30th 1705:

"Dearly Beloved,

I have entertained your former invitation, and this one with fear and trembling, being sensible of the greatness of the work and my manifold infirmities; but I am not my own; and my encouragement is, that the grace of Christ is sufficient for me. I have therefore voluntarily, freely, and entirely resigned myself up to his dispose, and find satisfaction therein. I bless his glorious name for the acceptance my labors have found amongst you, and looking upon it as his work, that you are inclined to give me the call, I therefore thankfully and willingly accept it."

Mr. Bridge was installed May 10, 1705, as colleague pastor with Rev. Benjamin Wadsworth.

The First Church Society gathered in 1630, and two years later built their first house of public worship. The second church edifice was erected in 1640–41, a wooden building, long in use when Mr. Bridge accepted the call.

The contrast between his former charge and the First Church must have impressed him greatly, In Fairfield, with its scattered farms, the inhabitants mostly devoted to agricultural pursuits, his congregations were necessarily limited. In the old and prosperous church he now served his hearers differed in their social standing from the small tradesman to the influential and aristocratic citizen, Here, Mr. Bridge could find the intellectual society deemed essential to the man of talent. The life of the family too must have changed with the removal and they could now enjoy many advantages from which they had long been deprived.

The Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company, of Boston, invited Mr. Bridge to preach the sermon at the annual election of officers June 4, 1705. He accepted the invitation and on that date spoke before them of "The Knowledge of God," a sermon, which later appeared in print.

Mr. Bridge accompanied the Commissioners on their journey to Port Royal, sailing from Boston July 5, and returning September 1, 1707.

As has been previously stated, Mr. Bridge educated his daughters as though they were sons. When, at last, Mrs. Bridge gave birth to a son, October 31, 1709, it must have brought joy to the household. At the baptism of the infant, named after the father, Thomas Bridge, Jr., it is said Mr. Bridge "for the first time joined his wife's name to his own on the church record." The parent's joy on the birth of a son was soon turned to grief as the child sickened and died of small pox.

Mr. and Mrs. Bridge's second daughter, Ellen, in her 23d year, married on Thursday, June 7, 1711, Joseph Marion, gentleman, the son of John Marion, Jr., a deacon of the First Church for thirty-six years.

It was the same year, October 3, 1711, that the old meeting-house was burned. Plans for a new house of worship were prepared, the new structure to be of brick 72 by 54 feet in size, and 32 feet to the plate. The corner stone was laid June 25, 1712.

The walls of the new brick meeting-house rose steadily and the building with its three tier of windows, surmounted by a bell-tower and clock, was so nearly completed that services were held and the first sermon preached in the new building May 3, 1713.

Rev. Benjamin Wadsworth, at the morning service, took for his text the words found in second Haggai,

ninth verse: "The glory of this latter house shall be greater than the former." His colleague, Rev. Thomas Bridge, preached in the afternoon, taking from the twenty-sixth Psalm, eighth verse, "Lord I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honor dwelleth."

In recognition of his ability and position Harvard College gave Mr. Bridge the honorary degree of Master of Arts, This was in 1712, and as he was the seventh man to have an honorary degree, it may be of interest to name the others. 1692: William Brattle, John Leverett, Increase Mather. 1703: Thomas Wells. 1709: Jared Eliot. 1710: John James.

The first three on the list were doubtless among the good friends Mr. Bridge had made in Boston, viz: Rev. William Brattle, minister of the church at Cambridge; John Leverett, a distinguished lawyer and judge, president of Harvard College from 1707 to 1724. He was one of the commissioners to Port Royal in 1707, a journey in which he had the company of Mr. Bridge; Increase Mather, minister of the Second Church in Boston. These men, and a number of others of prominence who could be named among his friends, show in what estimation he was held.

"The Mind at Ease. The Mystery of a Soul Finding Ease & Rest In the Enjoyment of God," a sermon by Mr. Bridge, was printed in 1712.

Writing under date of April 5, 1714, Mr. Bridge says, that "for more than half a Year past," (such was the condition of his health) that he was "under the impression of Apoplectical and Parlytical Distempers." He continued, however, to serve the church, though his faculties were somewhat affected. His malady was beyond recovery and death

terminated his earthly career September 26, 1715, at the age of fifty-eight years.

Judge Samuel Sewall makes note of the event in his diary, "7, 26, 1715:, Between 11 and 12. Mr. Bridge expired. The old Church, the Town, the Province have a great loss. He was particularly dear to me.

His prayers and sermons were many times exalted, not always alike. It may be this Lathorgick Malady might though unseen be the cause of some Unevenness. The Lord help us duly to lay the death of this worthy person to heart. We may justly fear he is taken away from Evil to Come. Isa. 57."

The funeral sermon was preached by Rev. Dr. Coleman. The remains were placed in the Cotton tomb in the Chapel Burying Ground, September 29, 1715.

The Church voted to pay the funeral expenses, which amounted to about one hundred and four pounds, it was further ordered the sum of four shillings a week be allowed Mrs. Bridge for the present.

By the death of her step father, William Paterson, a wealthy London banker, the sum of £1,500, was left by the provisions of his will, dated July 1, 1718, to Mrs. Bridge, "relic of the late Thomas Bridge, minister of the gospel in N. E."

Rev. Cotton Mather, colleague pastor of the Second Church, of which his father, Rev. Increase Mather was minister, was one of the most prolific writers; his publications numbering 382 or more, one being a sermon on the death of Rev. Thomas Bridge.

The following extracts are taken from the "New England Historical & Genealogical Register," for April 1865. They will give the reader some idea of Cotton Mather's style, also, additional information regarding Mr. Bridge.

"Born at Hackney, near London, in the year 1657, of Pious and Worthy Parents; After a Religious and Liberal Education, and some Travels into the Mediterranean; he Travelled into the American World, where he had a strong Inclination to see and serve the Kingdon of our Saviour. Here he first Instructed a Flock at Jamaica; and became as far as could be allow'd the Salt of that Island. Oh! might he have been more successfully one of the Æternitaltis Salitores there! From thence he removed unto the Island of Providence; Where, for some Time, he was the Principal Person in the Government, as well as the Instruction of the Plantation. From thence he removed unto the Island of Barmudas; where his Labour and and Courage, and Charity in the Time of a Mortality raging beyond any Pestilence, was worthy to be had in Everlasting Remembrance; and besides other Instances of it, in one Month he preached Nine and twenty sermons. From thence he removed unto West Jersey, where he did in the Recesses of a Patmos, conflict with Difficulties and with Discouragements, that proved a most improving School of Patience to him. From thence he removed unto BOSTON, the Metropolis of the English America, where the First Church invited him, that they might enjoy the Abilities of so Experienced a person, in the Pastorial Conduct of a Flock where Famous Predecessors were to be succeeded. The Light was now in a very considerable Candlestick; and shone for Eleven years together. Some of the Rays thereof, we have in Four Printed Composures; Entituled, I. The Mind at Ease. II. What Faith can do. III. Jethro's Counsel. IV. A sermon to the Artillery Company. Tho' such was his modest Indisposition to Appearances in the way of the

Press, that these Things, were some of them, like some of Chysostoms, only the Notes of those that wrote Short-Hand after him. Two years before he died, a Fit of an Apoplectic Tendency seized him.

From this Time, he felt his Faculties enfeebled. Yet he continued serviceable."

"In the 16th year of his age, Rev. John Collins 'originally of New England, was made his Spiritual Father,' 'begetting me to Christ,' he writes, 'by his Sermon on Acts 3. 19.' In his 17th year, he was 'admitted into Full Communion with the church under his Pastoral Charge.' 'When I left my Native Country, I had Letters Testimonial and Recommendatory, from Doctor John Owen, Mr. Mathew Meade, Mr. John Collins, Mr. George Griffith, Mr. Richard Lawrence, and Mr. Obadiah Hughes."

The eminent divine in paying tribute to his deceased friend availed himself of a manuscript written by Mr. Bridge, "when he drew near his end."

The Cotton Tomb, in King's Chapel Burying Ground, bears the following inscription:

Here lyes
Intombed the Bodies
of the Famous Reverend
and Learned Pastors of the First
Church of CHRIST in BOSTON
Viz.

Mr JOHN COTTON Aged 67 Years Dec d Dec m the 23 1652

Mr JOHN DAVENPORT Aged 72 Years Dec d March the 13 1670

Mr JOHN OXONBRIDGE Aged 66 Years Dec d December the 28 1670

Mr THOMAS BRIDGE Aged 58 Years Dec d September the 26 1715

The Society in Fairfield, West Jersey, where Mr. Bridge first settled, suffered by his removal, and it was not until 1708 that the church obtained a pastor; the Rev. Joseph Smith, a graduate of Harvard College, who was installed May 1709. He did not remain long, however, and soon returned to New England. Others came and went, and the log church of Mr. Bridge's time gave place to a comfortable frame building shingled on the sides, a style then in vogue. In this meeting-house Rev. Daniel Elmer, a graduate of Yale College, preached for a quarter of a century. About the church the people buried their dead, some of the ministers too, were laid in their narrow cells among them.

During the Revolution, a new church of stone was erected about one mile distant from the old site.

A yard was laid out by the new church and in time the old through man's neglect and indifference, was overgrown and trees grew among the graves.

The place, the establishment of the church in the wilderness, the compact of the early Fairfield settlers to "mainetaine a Sound & Orthodox Ministr of the Gospell," were not to be forgotten. Here on the banks of the Cohansey the Church of Christ was organized; here in West Jersey was the source of that stream of intelligence, righteousness and civil liberty, which flowing down the centuries, through generation after generation, as they scattered over our broad land, has influenced the lives of countless men and women.

Near where the old church once stood a handsome granite monument now stands, erected by the Presbytery of West Jersey to commemorate the founding of the church and the early settlers who laid that foundation secure.

This enduring memorial stands at the entrance of the old burying-ground; a quiet spot among the trees, where ancient time-stained stones tell of those who once worshiped in the old church.

The inscription on the monument has the names of the signers of the "Cohansey Compact," twenty-six in number. The names of John Fairchild and Zachariah Ferris appear in the body of the agreement and should be preserved with the others as members of Mr. Bridge's congregation.

On the monument is inscribed the following:

"IN MEMORY of the true and good men and women who coming in the seventeenth century founded here on the Cohansey, THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IN FAIRFIELD. It came under the care of the Presbytery of West Jersey, May 19, 1708. This monument is erected by their descendants and the Presbytery of West Jersey, June 15, 1909. REV. THOMAS BRIDGE WAS THEIR MINISTER."

"Signers of Agreement in Fairfield, June 10, 1697."

John Jones	John Chatfield
Jonathan Morehouse	John Mills
Joseph Seelye	Thomas Bennett
Joseph Sayre	Joseph Smith
Robert Dallglesh	Thomas Kernes
Joseph Wheeler	Joshua Curtis
Daniel Wescott	John Griffin
Joseph Grimes	Nicholas Johnson
John Roberts	Michael Hanna
Eleazer Smith	John Ogden
John Bennett	Samuel Foster
Samuel Bellnap	Edward Lummis
John Bateman	John Smith

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY
Los Angeles
This book is DUE on the last date stamped below.

Form L9–25*m*-8,'46(9852)444

THE LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
LOS ANGELES

*BX
7260
B7A5

L 009 636 399

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LI
AA 001 345 8